Primer for Reporters
UConn School of Engineering

Format:
    A. Teaser – headline, first sentence, photo [Get their attention!!]
    B. Story – headline, story, photo(s)

Audience:
    You are writing for different constituencies – technically savvy engineers/scientists, engineering students and alumni, prospective students and the *general public*. This means no/minimal jargon; simple language; PR orientation.

Story Content:
    In reporting on an event, honor, etc., ask yourself the traditional journalist's questions:

- <u>Who</u>? Who did it? Who received it? Who presented it? Who developed it? Who will benefit from it? Who do readers contact for more details?
- <u>What</u>? What happened? What honor was bestowed? What event is planned? What are the advantages or objectives?
- <u>When</u>? When will/did it happen? When is the deadline? When can we expect results?
- <u>Where</u>? Where will/did the event take place? Does the research take place within a cell, petri dish, organ, classroom?
- <u>How</u>? How does the new process work (generally, not too technical)? How is this new invention better than alternatives? How do I get to this event?
- <u>Why</u>? Why did Dr. X receive this award? Why is this event planned?

Tips:
- Choose stories that have widespread appeal to a broad audience; that enhance the reputation of the department, school or University, etc.
- Make headlines informative and interesting. You want people to read the story!!
- Compose stories in the "inverted pyramid" style, placing the most important content (who, what, when, where, how and why if possible) in the first paragraph.
- Write as if you had 30 seconds to convey important information. Make it interesting but economical in word use. Don't get bogged down in technical detail and jargon.
- If it's a research or education story, focus on how it will help society. Readers want to know how things will affect them, personally.
- Break up very long sentences. Remember that sentences must have a subject and a verb!
- Be consistent, both within your writeup and relative to other SoE web content. Look for conventions in current stories on the SoE website and adhere to them (e.g., "Dr. Cetegen" versus "professor Cetegen," "CSE" versus "CS&E"…)
- Tense – be consistent in the use of tenses, including situations where you are quoting someone (i.e., "he said," "he remarked," etc.).
- Use acronyms only after introducing the full name, i.e., "Civil & Environmental Engineering (CEE)."
- Trademarked (brand) names must be presented as they appear in company literature. For example, Kleenex® and HUGGIES® are registered trade names.

- Numbers – in referring to numbers of things/people, spell out numbers one through nine and use numbers for 10 and above.
- Possessive forms of nouns ending in "s" – this is a battleground among grammarians, but I append an apostrophe to the end of "s"-ending words to indicate possession. For example, "Dr. Jones' lab," "the professors' laboratories."
- Its versus it's – the only time you use "it's" is when you mean "it is." Every other instance of the word should appear "its."
- Spelling and grammar – use the Review/Spelling & Grammar function in Word to check and correct your work.
- Editing – after typing your story, read it aloud to yourself to catch awkward phrasing and missing words.
- If you are writing about someone else, someone else's award/research, etc., be sure to ask the individual(s) to review your draft for technical accuracy. This step will reduce the likelihood of urgent SOS calls after the story appears on our website!